

VZCZCXRO0117
OO RUEHDBU
DE RUEHKB #0787/01 2751257
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 021257Z OCT 09
FM AMEMBASSY BAKU
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1828
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 3568
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CDR USEUCOM VAHINGEN GE PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 0936
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE PRIORITY 1475

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAKU 000787

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EUR/CARC, DAS KAIDANOW, AMBASSADOR BRADTKE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/02/2019

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [TU](#) [AM](#) [AJ](#)

SUBJECT: CRACKS IN THE FACADE: BAKU LOSING PATIENCE WITH
TURKEY-ARMENIA?

REF: A. BAKU 690

[1](#)B. BAKU 697

[1](#)C. BAKU 709

[1](#)D. BAKU 776

Classified By: Charge Donald Lu, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: This cable contains an action request, please see paragraph 5. Reftels describe the uncharacteristically calm reactions of the GOAJ to developments between Turkey and Armenia since the August 31 announcement of a six-week period of political consultations leading up to the signing of the two protocols. As the date draws nearer, we are seeing indications that Azerbaijan's moderate facade may be cracking and encourage high-level USG interaction with President Aliyev to head off any potential disruption of the process. End Summary.

The Bad Cops Go Public

[1](#)2. (C) October 1 saw two uncompromising public statements from senior GOAJ officials that appeared to depart from the government's line of August 31 that reflected reassurance that the Turkish political process would serve as a brake on ratification of the protocols until tangible progress was observed on Nagorno-Karabakh (NK). Deputy Foreign Minister Araz Azimov and the head of the Social-Political Department of the Presidential Administration, Ali Hasanov, both made comments to the effect that the signature of the protocols was contrary to Azerbaijan's interests and would be a negative factor in NK settlement. These comments were made at press stand-ups following unrelated events but were widely disseminated by government-friendly television and print media.

Aliyev's Tough Talk for Europeans

[1](#)3. (C) Embassy also learned from the British Ambassador and French DCM that President Aliyev was direct and unsparing in pouring out his dissatisfaction over the Turkey-Armenia process to visiting EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus Peter Semneby on September 29. According to these sources, who were not present at the meeting but were briefed afterward, Aliyev complained at length to Semneby that Azerbaijan's interests were being ignored and harmed by

"Western countries" that were pushing Turkey and Armenia forward. (Note: The French DCM added that Aliyev, it seemed, made no distinction between the EU and the United States in this connection. End Note.) Aliyev told Semneby that if Azerbaijan's interests are ignored by the West, he has options for selling his gas to the North, South, or even East, in that order; i.e. not West.

Turkey's Last-Minute Maneuvers?

14. (C) Reftels noted that Turkey had headed off an explosive Azerbaijani response to the August 31 announcement through, at a minimum, skillful diplomacy and personal reassurances in the days leading up to the announcement. Turkey has apparently attempted to do the same in recent days, with Erdogan balancing his disclosure of the planned October 10 signing with statements that Turkey would never act in a way contrary to Azerbaijan's interests. The Speaker of the Turkish Parliament and former AKP minister Mehmet Ali Shahin amplified the message in Baku last week for the Pan-Turkic parliamentary assembly, assuring President Aliyev and the Azerbaijani Milli Majlis that Turkey would not ratify the protocols without a solution to the NK conflict. President Gul and FM Davutoglu traveled to the Azerbaijani exclave of Nakhchivan this week for the pan-Turkic summit for what will be the last round of high-level, face-to-face Turkish-Azerbaijani contact before the signing.

Comment and Action Request

BAKU 00000787 002 OF 002

15. (C) Azimov and Hasanov's harsh commentary should be taken in stride, but not ignored. Neither individual is believed to have direct input to NK policymaking. However, very little happens by accident here. While the benign possibility is that their commentary is intended simply to make a point that can be walked back later, as has happened in the past, that is not the only possibility. Aliyev's reported blast at Semneby is of more immediate concern. It may be that a side effect of Turkey's improved handling of Aliyev has been the redirection of blame for the Turkey-Armenia process onto the United States and Europe. A bad outcome for Aliyev in Chisinau will magnify this effect. October 10 may be shaping up to be as decisive a moment for the Turkey-Armenia-Azerbaijan portfolio of issues as April 7, when Aliyev refused to attend the Istanbul Summit and nearly knocked Turkey's policy off the rails. Telephone contact with Aliyev by S and POTUS was decisive in bringing Azerbaijan back on board then, and may also prove to be so now. Embassy recommends Washington consider such a call to Aliyev, preferably before the Chisinau meeting with Sargsian but in any case before October 10. Embassy notes that Aliyev can generally not be contacted while traveling abroad. End Comment/Action Request.

LU
LU